

LIGHTNING SAFETY LESSON PLAN

FOR PRE-SCHOOL

(3-5 Year Olds)

1) Have colorful lightning safety storyboard, poster, or pictures on display, just something pretty to look at. Posters are available from the National Weather Service.

2) Pass around an anemometer so they can spin a propeller and you talk a bit about being a weather forecaster and this is how we measure the winds.

3) Have them sit as a group and you lead them through a thunderstorm lifecycle

- Pat top of legs/clap hands to imitate rain drops, lightly and slow at first, then growing in volume and speed
 - Snapping fingers work better, but most 4 year olds can't do this yet
- Voice (not yell) the word 'boom' for thunder, first a little, then more as the "thunderstorm" peaks
- Decrease the thunder, both in volume and speed, as the "thunderstorm" dies out
- Decrease the rain, both in volume and speed, as the "thunderstorm" continues to die
- Maybe one last surprise 'boom' at the end, just for fun
 - It also plants the idea that lightning can happen away from the thunderstorm

4) Teach the rule 'If You Hear Thunder, Go Inside'

- Have them repeat it a few times in unison. "I can't heeeeeaaaaaaarrr you". To the teacher, "Oh, I think they can do better than that", etc.

5) Ask them for what activities they do outside in summer. You might have to ask leading questions if they don't respond at first, e.g. if no initial answers, follow-up with, what do you do in a pool? Have some activities ready, if they don't chose any, e.g. swimming, bicycling, playground, soccer, etc.

- Select 2-3 kids, especially those who suggested a specific activity, to imitate one of the outdoor activities, standing up in from of the rest that remain sitting in a group. Tell the standing kids that when they 'Hear Thunder, Go Inside" and designate the playhouse/box building as the place to go inside
 - If a playhouse or box building isn't available, pick another set of kids to be the "house", standing up facing each other, with arms reaching up and forward to be the roof
- Quickly lead the sitting kids through the thunderstorm again

- If the outdoor activities kids don't react to the first 'boom' of thunder, prompt them to go 'inside'.
 - Quickly chase around just behind them with crackling noises and outstretched arms with wiggling fingers, "I'm lightning, you're outside where I can get you!" But make sure they know it's joking. If one is getting scared, back off immediately.
- Once inside, again act like lightning trying to get them, but the house stops you and you fall to the ground too tired to do anything more or hurt because you bumped the house
- Lead the kids through repeating the rule in unison again. Then repeat all of #4 by choosing another outdoor activity. Be sure to choose different kids to imitate an outdoor activity and house (if needed).
- Repeat again as needed. As much as possible, give every kid a chance to do an outdoor activity.

6) Time to start calming down and end the lesson. Lead them through repeating the rule again.

7) Ask for any questions on lightning and lightning safety. Be prepared for lightning stories that aren't questions. I usually pick a point out of the story, make a lightning safety blurb out of it, tying it back to 'The Rule', and then refocus the group on questions. E.g., if one tells a story of a tree that got destroyed by lightning, say "boy, that must have been scary, see being under trees is not a good place to be when you hear thunder, remember our lightning safety rule 'If you hear thunder, go inside'. Now does anyone have a question, not just a story, about lightning?"

8) Close with more round of repeating the rule in unison, 'If You Hear Thunder, Go Inside'.